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Final Project Report

*Sustainable development: emerging
linkages between PRIs and NGOs*

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Contents

Executive Summary
Acknowledgements
Introduction and Identification of Issues
Methodology and Social Context
Cases Studies
Tentative Conclusions
Bibliography
Appendices

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Executive Summary

In recent years there is a growing realisation that the existing model of development is causing environmental problems and in the absence of suitable corrective measures it might lead to an environmental crisis. Therefore, at various levels, measures have been initiated to promote alternatives. Sustainable development has been identified as one of the model. However, there is no unanimity on what exactly the sustainable development model means. In fact, a number of definitions have been provided in recent years and their number is increasing (if one glance through the internet).

In the Indian context, where a large section of people live in villages and depend on natural resources for their survival, the idea of sustainable development must necessarily take note of sustainability of sources of livelihood. This in other words would mean access to natural resources such as land, water, forest and bio-diversity and also its conservation. Unfortunately, recent trends indicate that this is not happening. Therefore, as an alternative sustainable development has been encouraged at the grassroots with the creation of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and also through the involvement of Non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

Given the above background the primary objective of this project is to find out what kind of linkages are emerging between PRIs and NGOs. Besides what are the experiences and involvement of PRIs and NGOs while promoting sustainable development at the grass roots.

In the course of the study on the basis of secondary data and case studies we have come to following tentative inferences. i) The scope for linkages between PRIs and NGOs at the grassroots are more where there exists some kind of homogeneity within a community or among communities. For instance, land owning peasantry is more concerned with sustainability of water resources. Whereas a tribal community is more concerned with the issue of access to forest and forest produced. ii) Only those NGO initiatives find acceptability with the PRIs that provide benefits to maximum number of local people. Besides, organization of group activities must be permitted on the basis tribe, gender, caste and other identities. For instance, in Heggade Devana Kote (H.D. Kote) Taluk of Mysore district the initiative promoted by the Mysore Rehabilitation and Development Agency (MYRADA) to provide rural credit through self-help-groups (SHGs) has allowed people to organize self-help-groups in their locality on the basis of tribe, caste, gender, etc., The initiative has succeeded in involving all strata of the society and its benefits have resulted in social change. No PRI in that area can ignore Myrada and its activities totally. iii) There is also a possibility for linkages between the PRIs and NGOs when an NGO initiate a programme targeting a particular marginalised community, such as Scheduled Castes. The important point here is the community must be reasonably large and in the range of 20 to 30 per cent of the total population of a Zilla Panchayat (ZP), or a Taluk Panchayat (TP) or a Village Panchayat (VP). For instance, in Tumkur district the human potential development programme initiated by Rural Education for Development Society (REDS) is targeted for the SCs. This programme has succeeded in organizing the SCs through Dalit Jagurati Sangah (DJS) and succeeded in making an impact. Nearly 66 PRI members in Tumkur district during the period 1993-1998 were directly or indirectly benefited through Red's activities that also includes environmental concerns. The same cannot be said about the tribals of

H.D. Kote Taluk. The tribals there feel the PRIs and other communities are least concerned on issues concerning to them, their survival and sustainability of their livelihood.

v) From the study it also emerges that where the PRIs and NGOs work together community support is strong. Working together may be on any issue including development or promoting sustainability through a local level project, or organization of local people to protest on a unsustainable development project. For instance, the canal passing through Bagur and Navillae villages connecting the Hemavathi river has disturbed the water table. It is going down and down and ponds and wells running dry in the beginning of summer months which was not the case earlier. In this particular case development for one section of people is resulting in unsustainability to another section by destroying the sources of livelihood. In the absence of PRIs and NGOs perhaps issues related to sustainability of survival sources at the local level may not have highlighted and supported by others as it is done today.

These observations are tentative and context specific. Therefore definite suggestions may not be possible at this stage but a few tentative suggestions may be noted. To promote sustainability at the grass roots there is a need to bridge the gap within a community and also among communities. This involves development and basic issues such as literacy, employment opportunities and empowerment of the marginalised. Secondly before launching any development initiative a base line survey must be conducted so that there is some kind of understanding of the target groups before launching a project. Thirdly, NGOs must take lead in organizing people on issues related to sustainable development. Finally, NGO initiative must strategise their programmes and initiatives by taking note of the local conditions. The chances of success of a programme promoting sustainable development are more when there is involvement of local associations and NGOs.

Chapter-1

Introduction and Identification of Issues

With increasing signs of environmental crisis the existing model of development has been increasingly questioned in recent years. At the same time there is a growing realisation that the present pattern of consumption of energy resources and promotion of un-restrained consumerism will lead to scarcity of resources in the coming decades. In fact the basic issue is whether can we allow a unsustainable model of development to continue. As an alternative it is argued that our model of development must be sustainable.

Formally speaking, sustainable development as an alternative form of development has been popularized with the publication Brundtland Commission Report - Our Common Future - in 1987. The report emphasized on the importance of promoting a development model that while meeting the needs of the present generation also take note of the needs of future generations. In other words, future generations are not put in to disadvantages in terms of environment, natural resources that includes land, water, forest and bio-diversity while meeting the needs of present generation.

However, it is argued that the task of promotion of sustainable development cannot be left alone to the state. More importantly it has also pointed out that the state sponsored development model has often caused damage to environment and degradation of natural resources such as land, water, forests and bio-diversity. In this context it is argued that the civil society must play a constructive role.

Thus the task of promotion of sustainable development has been viewed as common task involving the instrumentalities of the state as well as the civil society. In addition given the failure of centralized planned development model with collapse of the erstwhile Soviet Union, it has been argued that sustainable development model must promote grassroots initiatives which essentially mean decentralized model with the participation of local people.

While contextualising this understanding in the Indian context we may note the following. In the Indian context threat to environment emerges not due to unrestrained consumerism, or excessive consumption of energy sources but primarily due to denial of access to sources of livelihood. At the grassroots even today the survival of a large section of people is dependent on the access and availability of sources of livelihood. For instance, the tribal communities are dependent on forest produced similarly the small landowning sections are dependent on the water sources for agricultural produced.

The centralized planned development experiment in India has not been successful in eliminating poverty during the last five decades, i.e., since independence. As an alternative the state has accepted decentralization since the beginning of nineties. As a measure in this direction panchayati raj Institutions(PRIs) have been created through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment in April 1993 at the district level, at the Taluk or block level and at the village level. Considerable powers, in fact 28 subjects, have been included within the jurisdiction of the PRIs to promote

development. Since 1993 all the States have initiated steps to enact conformity acts promote PRIs at the grassroots level. By all probability as it appear today PRIs are bound to stay. No matter whatever variation and results they may produce in different states in terms of exercising their powers and function.

On the other hand, Non-governmental organization which vary in terms of their ideology and organization have been viewed as pioneers in raising environment related issues and also pointing at unsustainability of the state sponsored development model since the beginning of seventies. At the micro level they have been active in promoting alternatives particularly involving the marginalised communities such as the tribals, women and the SCs. In addition with beginning of eighties a number initiatives were launched to promote social forestry, dry land development and joint forest management by the NGOs in different parts of the country.

Another significant point that needs to be noted in this context is the absence of vibrant PRIs at the grassroots in most states in contrast to what we have today. In fact NGOs programmes that promoted alternatives as catalysts by involving local communities. While some of these experiments succeeded and did make an positive impact at the grassroots. In some places such experiments died down once the agency involved withdrew its support to such initiatives. In fact, it is argued that there is need for institutional support at the grass roots and NGOs cannot be substitutes as they have no legal structures or democratic character to promote participation of all sections of people.

In other words, it is clear by the mid-eighties that the NGO initiatives cannot be sustained in the absence of local support. More importantly sustainable development cannot be strategised by NGOs alone. Local communities often viewed NGOs as outsiders. This realisation, on the one hand, argued for opportunities where by PRIs and NGOs can work together. On the other hand, the need for a mechanism so that the PRIs and NGOs can interact at the grassroots.

1.1 The Issue for Research

Given the above understanding, context, and initiatives to promote sustainable development through PRIs and NGOs the main issue the study proposes to study, to be precise, is the emerging linkages between the PRIs and NGOs at the grassroots. In addition what kind of experiences and relationship emerge between PRIs and NGOs while promoting sustainable development at the grassroots.

It is true that the above noted issues in vast country like India appear to be too broad and general. Besides, the PRIs and NGOs canvass is too large. Nonetheless the above noted issues cannot be ignored totally. It is for the simple reason that whatever may be the limitations of the PRIs today, in terms of composition and dominating influence of feudal structures at the grassroots we cannot imagine short cuts. Democratic structures can be possible at the grassroots only through the PRIs.

Similarly, there are very few agencies other than the NGOs (which may have a local character, or regional, or national or international and even defy classification) that take up the task of organizing, conscientising and training people at the grassroots. The state and its agencies such as the bureaucracy have not taken up the task of organizing, conscientising and or

training people at the grassroots seriously in the promotion of sustainable development. Sometimes the state has taken the help of NGOs, sometimes it has been left all together to the NGOs. In other words the role of NGOs in the promotion of sustainability cannot be ruled out.

In scenario like this whatever little is initiated by the PRIs and NGOs and succeeds in promoting development and sustainability at the grassroots may provide useful insights. On the basis of these insights at least some kind of generalization can be drawn so that while devising future projects promoting sustainability the role of PRIs and NGOs can be defined and also strategies can be devised.

Having outlined the context, understanding of sustainability in the Indian context, the role of decentralization and the instrumentalities of PRIs and NGOs in the next chapters an attempt has been made first to identify a methodology, then to provide a brief outline of the PRIs and NGO network in Karnataka. Further specific details of the case studies and data related to NGOs and PRIs activities in two districts provided. Also a few instances where the issue of sustainability involved and the reaction of PRIs and NGOs included, though more details of these have to be collected and verified. The tentative conclusions and suggestions are noted at the end. Details of case study data such as NGO network in Tumkur and Mysore, individual interviews involving the NGO activists, members of PRIs and bureaucracy etc., is given in the form of appendix. The draft report also includes a bibliography.

Chapter - 2

Methodology and Situating the Study

In this chapter an attempt has been made first to identify the methodology for the study. In the second part an attempt has also been made to situate the study. This is done by providing a brief outline of panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka and also by providing a historical background, details related to NGO networking in Karnataka. Below we take up these one by one.

2.1 Methodology

Given the specific objectives and other constraints the case study method has been adopted to collect data. It has been supplemented by secondary data from published sources. Further, field observations have also been made use of. A few interviews with select persons have been conducted. These interviews are mostly unstructured and conducted in the local language (Kannada).

For case studies two districts Tumkur and Mysore in Karnataka have been selected. The rationale for selection of these two districts is existence of NGO network and also availability of some relevant instances in the recent past, particularly related to the promotion of sustainability. Besides, the functioning of PRIs in Karnataka for more than decade provide better case for study.

Further the case studies are more focused on one prominent NGO in each district. Attempt is also made to study local NGOs. For the PRIs the focus is on rural panchayats rather than the urban panchayats. However, here the difficulty is selection of panchayats as they exist at three levels -- district, taluk and village. There is no block level PRIs in Karnataka.

2.2 Panchayati Raj Institutions in Karnataka

Relatively speaking, Karnataka unlike many other states has a better record of panchayati raj institutions (PRIs). The reasons for such a positive record must be reviewed in the context of its development in socio-economic and political arena during pre-independence period. Among these factors we may note the prominent three.

2.3 Caste Based Reservations

Most areas that come under the present state of Karnataka which was formed under the state organisation act in 1957 were earlier part of Mysore kingdom. A note worthy feature of Mysore kingdom in terms of social justice is that it introduced caste based reservations much earlier than any other state or kingdom of that period introduced them. In fact these were initiated at the turn of the nineteenth century itself (1895). Mention must be made here various commissions and committees that were appointed at different periods to study and suggest ways to promote social justice through implementation of reservations. Prominent and earliest among these are the Miller Committee Report the latest are the Havanur Commission and Chinnappa Reddy Commission in 1986. Thus social justice measures were implemented much before the Mandal Commission report implementation in August 1990 at the national level. Secondly, the state introduced land reforms and implemented them in the early seventies. Thirdly the political and bureaucratic elite in the state constituted exclusively upper caste brahmins alone but also persons belonging to

middle castes such as Vokkaligas and Lingayats. Both these middle castes, Lingayats and Vokkaligas enjoyed job reservations benefits even today. In brief this is the social context and factors that influence the present context in which the PRIs and NGOs operate.

2.4 Reservations in the PRIs

Karnataka was one of the first states that introduced reservation of seats in the PRIs to Scheduled castes, Scheduled tribes. More importantly provision was made to reserve seats for women in the PRIs. This was done as early as 1987, ie., much before the 73rd constitutional amendment that provided reservation of one third seats to women in the PRIs in April 1993. Another point that needs mention here is that reservations were further extended to the post of pre siding officers of the PRIs such as president and vice president of the PRIs. This is something innovative.

However, the above noted developments have also lead to some kind of developments. It is increasingly realised in the beginning of nineties that the legislators and the bureaucracy did not like the strengthening of PRIs as they limited their role. More importantly, a sizable section of women who participated in the proceedings of the PRI gradually developed awareness on social, political and economic issues. Under the circumstances, the dominant sections faced competition and their leadership became unsustainable.

In fact regular elections to the PRIs were viewed as e opportunities for alternative leadership. Therefore, attempts have been made to postpone elections. This was the case in 1992 and more repeated again in February-March 1999.

2.5 Legislation and PRIs in Karnataka

The history of Panchayati Raj Institution in the State of Karnataka has seen lots of ups and down. With the formation of the Karnataka state in 1956 (then Mysore) the state consisted of areas that earlier belonged to different administrative regions (Mysore kingdom, Madras presidency, Bombay Presidency, Nizaham of Hyderabad and Coorg). Without going into the details we may note for our purpose here that in 1959 a bill was passed, namely the Mysore village Panchayats and Local Boards Act to perform developmental, administrative and political tasks. It also created three-tier panchayati system. These were village panchayats, town panchayats at the village level, taluk development board at the taluk level and district development board. Suffice to note here such a system failed to make any meaningful contribution towards -grassroots democracy.

The breakthrough came in 1983. In that year the ruling party in the state, Congress lost power in the state for the first time after independence. A coalition government consisting of Kranti-Ranga, Janata Party, Bharatiya Janatha Party and independents was formed. Though the constituents of the coalition government subscribed a variety of ideologies but in principle they were for decentralisation through the PRIs. Components like Kranthi Ranga and Ryotha Sanga were primarily concerned with deteriorating conditions of the peasant as drought occurred repeatedly where as Janatha Party had centrist perspective. But the BJP was for homogenization. However, under the leadership of late Abdul Nazir Sahib, (rural development minister in the ministry) the government took a radical step and introduced the Act which was known as the Karnataka Zilla Parishads, Taluk Panchayat Samities, Mandal Panchayats and Nyaya Panchayats

Act 1983. A note worthy feature of the Act was that it reserved 25 per cent of seats for women members, including SC and ST women in local bodies.

Elections were held on January 12, 1987 for 887 seats in Zilla parishads and on 20 January for nearly 55,000 seats in 2,465 mandals. The government also lowered the voting age to 18 years. Documentary evidence and studies conducted on the functioning of these Panchayati Raj Institutions establish that they took serious steps to initiate and implement developmental programmes. In the absence of effective PRIs the State centered approach through administrative machinery could not promote development. The PRI centered development process the initiated in 1987 in Karnataka¹ was able to initiate significant changes, though there was little change in the leadership.

In 1989 Congress party returned to power in the state. The first five year term of the Zilla Parishad elected in 1987 came to an end in the second week of January 1992. Congress government did not conduct elections. In April 1993 the legislature passed a new bill that came into force from May 18, 1993. It may not be out of context the motives behind to change the existing legislation. First the Legislation of 1987 provided powers both in terms of execution and financial sphere. Secondly it recognized the supremacy of elected representatives vis-a-vis the bureaucracy. Thirdly, the local members of parliament and state Assembly saw their marginalisation and emerging grassroots leadership which often showed potential to challenge the existing leadership. Finally regular elections and reservations to women helped in challenging the dominance of landowning upper castes. All these motives were never discussed. But the changes and amendment brought in April 1993 to the 1987 Act reflect only the curtailment rather than any progressive advancement.

For our purpose we may note the following relevant points of the Act: (i)"It established a three-tier panchayat system in the state based on the population as contained at the preceding census of which the figures have been published. It envisaged elected bodies at all the three levels. (ii) It provided for reservation of seats in favour of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in proportion to their population, and for reservation of not less than one-third of the total seats for women at all levels (iii) It also provided for reservation of one third of the total seats at all level to Backward classes with an annual income below Rs.10,000. (iv) Offices of Chairpersons at all levels were also reserved in favour of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and Backward classes with women getting not less than one-third in the reserved and unreserved categories of offices of adhyakshas and upadhyakshas (v) It envisaged the constitution of State Election commission, the State finance commission and district planning" (Subha 1997: 6-7).

Further we may note briefly the present three tier system, i.e., Gram Panchayat, Taluk Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat as stated in the 1993 Act.

2.6 Gram Panchayat

According to the Act, normally a gram panchayat will be constituted for a population between 3,000 and 5,000. The area covered by a gram panchayat will consist of a village or a group of villages. There will be one member for every 400 persons. The adhyaksha and upadhyaksha (president and vice president) are to be elected from among the elected members. There are three standing committees, namely (a) Production Committee (b) Social Justice Committee (c) A Secretary is appointed by the government as administrative head of the gram panchayat.

The main functions of the gram panchayat are to promote economic and social welfare, education and health. Under the Act, the state government gives an annual grant of Rs. 1 lakh.

2.7 Taluk Panchayat

For each Taluk there shall be a taluk panchayat consisting of local representatives from the state legislature and Parliament, one fifth of the gram panchayat adhyakshas in the taluk chosen by lots every year (in rotation). Members are directly elected from separate territorial constituencies at the rate of one member for every 10,000 population.

The elected members of the taluk panchayat have to choose two members from among themselves to be the adhyaksha and Upadhyoksha. The taluk panchayat will have the following standing committees. (i) General Standing Committee (iii) Social Justice Committee. A Group-A officer of the state civil services is to be the administrative head of the taluk panchayat. Taluk panchayats are empowered to supervise the activities of Gram Panchayats in their jurisdiction.

2.8 Zilla Panchayat

Each district will have a Zilla panchayat consisting of the members of parliament and state legislature from within the district, the adhyakshas of taluk panchayats in the district, and elected members in accordance with the scale of one member for 40,000 of the population. The elected members shall choose two members from amongst them to be adhyaksha and upadhyaksha. The Zilla panchayat will have the following standing committees (i) General Standing Committee (ii) Finance, Audit and Planning Committee (iii) Social Justice Committee (iv) Education and Health Committee (v) Agriculture and industries Committee.

The Chief executive officer, not below the rank of deputy commissioner, is to be the administrative head of the Zilla panchayat. The Act reduced the powers of the Zilla panchayat substantially. The Chief executive officer is not under the adhyaksha. He has the power to assign duties and supervise Zilla Panchayat officials in accordance with the rules made by the state government. He has to report directly to the government. The adhyaksha is to merely convene, preside over and conduct meetings (ibid: 8). Besides, under the 1993 Karnataka Panchayati Raj Act, the Grama Sabha is a statutory body. It is obligatory on the part of the Gram Panchayat to convene a meeting at least once in 6 months. All adults who are in the voters list of the village are members of the Gram Sabha.

To sum up we may note the following. In 1983, when a coalition Government came to power it had to fight the single party domination at the Centre and the State. Therefore, with the help of mass support it could wage its fight for decentralisation by drafting a radical Panchayati Raj Act. But a decade later when it recaptured power from the Congress in 1994 it did not restore the supremacy of the elected representatives. Partly, from 1996 onwards with the emergence of coalition politics at the Center the demand for decentralization by the regional political formations and other dominant sections is becoming weaker and weaker. As a result both the Center and State governments often appear to neglect the PRIs in recent years. A case in point is delay in announcing election schedules and failure to carry out proper amendments to strengthen Panchayati Raj Institutions.

However, people centered non-governmental organizations and people's organization are consistently demanding a change by strengthening participation. In the next section we briefly cover the Non-governmental organizations in Karnataka.

2.8 Voluntary organizations In Karnataka

Broadly speaking, Karnataka has a relatively better network of Non-governmental organizations. These are organized at the State level, at the district level and at the taluk level. Further, commonality of ideology, target groups, developmental and organizational strategies have also resulted in networks. However classification of NGO in itself is a broad subject and beyond the scope of this study.

For our purpose we limit only to Mysore and Tumkur districts. As a matter of fact non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and NGO net works has a considerable presence in Mysore and Tumkur Districts. On the basis of a causal interactions with social activists and surface observations one may note variety of NGOs in both the districts. There are organizations functioning since early eighties, and early nineties, and also organizations functioning since 1993. The number of organisations functioning since early eighties are very few in both the districts. However, organizations such as Mysore Rehabilitation and Developmental Agency (MYRADA) in Mysore district and Rural Education for Development of Society (REDS) in Tumkur district may be placed in this category. These organizations through their ideology, strategy, have done pioneering work in both the districts. This has given a distinct identity and vision particularly to the weaker sections including women and dalits.

The organizations functioning since late eighties and early nineties seems to be influenced by the impact and success of MYRADA and REDS respectively. Often one comes across in both the districts most organizations applying the same strategies of MYRADA and REDS. It must be noted here that the strategies of MYRADA and REDS differ. MYRADA concentrates its activities in the most backward taluk of Mysore district, Heggade Devana Kote by initiating Self Help Groups (SHGs). Self Help Groups have cultivated a sense of saving among rural people to solve the problem of rural credit. For Reds in Tumkur district the target group is the Dalits. Its strategy is to train the Dalits for organization and leadership purposes of the Dalit Community. To achieve this objective it has a strategy. Accordingly a four month duration human potential development programme is organized regularly. It provides practical training to the Dalits. Trained Dalits are motivated to organize Dalit Jagurati Sangahas (DJS) at villages. More importantly such Sangahs slowly involve in community issues. REDS through DJS has made an impact in Tumkur. Another organization that combined the strategy of MYRADA and REDS seems to be FEDINA VIKASA at H.D. Kote by organizing only tribals.

Both MYRADA and FEDINA VIKASA have their main offices at Bangalore, whereas REDS office is located in the district head quarters. Interestingly, organizations that came into light in late eighties and early nineties are either limited to one taluk or one village only. Some have only two or three persons and no separate offices. The third category as noted already are organizations with little experience and are still in the process of making an impact. Most of these organization are located in the urban centers, such as district head quarters or taluk head quarters. They have very limited resources both financial and human. Besides, it is difficult for

them to copy the strategies and tactics of well established NGOs as they have very heterogeneous group of people in urban centers.

Interestingly, in recent years the ideological heterogeneity and different target groups and other differences separates most NGOs both in Mysore and Tumkur districts. Further, it appears that the well established NGOs do not feel the need of a common platform, whereas the not so well established NGOs often fail to unite all the NGOs at a common platform. Leadership issue, financial expenditure, local competition are cited as reasons for not having effective networking at the district and taluk level. Both in Mysore and Tumkur districts there existed a common organization consisting of most NGOs of the district. At Mysore MYTRI still functions but in Tumkur the spirit of a common organization is declining. However one comes across a number of small networks at the taluk and at other levels.

The relevant question for us here is how NGOs relate them selves with PRIs at different levels. As noted already there were not many NGOs in early eighties in Mysore and Tumkur districts. Those existed during that period were also in their formative phase and naturally their relationship with PRIs was limited. With the enactment of 1985 Karnataka panchayat act and creation of panchayats at different levels in 1987 the NGOs were mostly involved in training the elected members to make them aware of their role and functions. More importantly, prior to the enactment of the 1985 Panchayat Act the public debate in the media and later in legislature accommodated most of the points raised by the peoples' organizations and NGOs. However the enactment of the 1993 Act limited the role of PRIs. Therefore confrontation and conflict was expected between the PRIs and NGOs.

With this objective in mind the researcher collected data by adopting mainly methods such as participatory observations, interviews and interactions with the people, beneficiaries of NGO activities, elected representatives of village panchayats, taluk panchayats, Zilla panchayats, administrators at the village, taluk and district level, functionaries and NGO activists. The details are given in the next section of the report.

Chapter - 3

Case Studies

In this chapter we concentrate mainly on three issues. In the first part we provide some relevant primary data related to two districts Mysore and Tumkur. In the second part we provide some insights on the activities of the NGOs and PRIs in the two districts. In the third part we take up four instances where the issue of sustainability and sources of livelihood involved.

3.1 A Brief Profile of Tumkur and Mysore Districts

Tumkur District: Its total population is 2305819. Of which 1177233 males and 1128586 are females. The rural population of the district is 1923656 (975346 males and 948310 females). The total urban population is 382163 (201887 males and 180276).

The Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population of the district as per 1991 Census are 408524 persons and 167632 persons respectively. The rural-urban breakup of these population is indicated below:

Rural (i) Scheduled Castes: 364376
(ii) Scheduled Tribes: 149641

Urban (i) Scheduled Castes: 44148
(ii) Scheduled tribes: 17991

Religion-wise breakup of Population as per 1981 Census

Hindus: 1824786, Muslims: 143138, Christians: 5349, Sikhs:94, Buddhists: 9, Persuasions: 45, Religion not stated: 6.

The district at present comprises of 10 talukas. It has 12 and 2718 villages (2537 inhabited villages and 81 uninhabited villages).

3.2 Mysore District

Total population of the district according to 1991 Census is 31650158 persons, (1620624 males and 1544394 females). The rural population of the district is 2224724 persons (1136626 males and 1088098 females) and urban population is 940294 persons (483998 males and 456296 females).

Rural (i) Scheduled Castes: 480387
(ii) Scheduled Tribes: 77696

Urban (i) Scheduled Castes: 117534
(ii) Scheduled Tribes: 24406

The district at present comprises of 11 talukas. It has 18 towns and 18844 villages (16549 inhabited villages and 195 uninhabited villages).

The Urban population of the district as percentage of total population in the census years 1981 and 1991 is indicated below.

In percentage 27.41 (1981), 29.76, (1991); density of population, 264 per sq.km.

The field work and data collection for the project was carried out during March-April 1999. During this period the researcher (being conversant in the local language Kannada) visited Mysore and Tumkur districts. In addition to this all the seven taluks in Mysore and all the ten taluks in Tumkur district were covered for data collection.

3.3 PRIs in Tumkur and Mysore

In total there are 361 village panchayats in Mysore district and in Tumkur district the number of village panchayats is 320. The total number of elected representatives in Mysore district is 5870 of which 1409 are Scheduled Caste, 457 Scheduled Tribe, 1960 Backward Castes and 2044 belong to other sections of the society. Among these 567 are women from Scheduled Caste, 375 women from Scheduled Tribe and 756 are from backward castes and 801 belong to other sections of the society.

In Tumkur district the total number of elected panchayat members is 4931, of which 1076 belong to Scheduled Caste, 482 belong to Scheduled tribe, 1642 belong to backward Castes and 1731 belong other sections of the society. Among these 424 are Scheduled caste women, 334 Scheduled tribe women, 647 Backward caste women and 668 women belong to other sections of the society.

In Mysore district the researcher could visit nearly hundred Villages panchayats and meet more than 100 members of village panchayats. In Tumkur District apart from visiting nearly 65 village panchayats the researcher attended a training programme organized by a NGO to review the experiences since 1993 by the elected members of PRIs.

3.4 Field Observations

Asked how they view the relationship between the PRIs and NGOs most elected members of PRIs replied that whatever the PRIs and NGOs do for the betterment of their village is welcome. Being members of the PRIs whenever they ask for small repair work, the standard reply is there is no money. Therefore, the PRIs are in no position to influence or control the work of the NGOs. But they did point out that there is gap between what the NGOs say and practice. For instance, organizations such as Fedina Vikasa sincerely worked in the early nineties to empower the tribals of N.Begur, in H.D.Kote taluk of Mysore District. However the recent trend is to withdraw from most of the activities. In fact ten years involvement has resulted in some improvement in conscientising the tribals. But centuries old deprivation may not be overcome in few years involvement and withdrawal by NGOs has further worsened their conditions as they have no access to forest resources nor they can compete with others. More importantly, in H.D. Kote Taluk of Mysore district a section of Scheduled Tribe women and men said:" to address their needs which are specific to their community they demand creation of separate tribal panchayats."

When asked to the bureaucrats and administrators how they view the relationship between the PRIs and NGOs the answer was vague. Formally speaking, they said, the 1993 Act mentions the NGOs only in the context of Standing Committees. Therefore, their role is limited. But the district administration often take the help of NGOs in implementing government programmes. Besides, when NGOs take initiative to promote developmental activities such as construction of additional rooms to the school building, construction of community halls and dwelling units etc. it is encouraged by the administration.

Interestingly, most of the administrative staff at district and taluk level view the elected members of PRIs as ignorant and not fit to carry out executive and administrative functions. This was the view of the administrators at Mysore Zilla Panchayat.

However when pointedly asked to the elected members of the PRIs how they view their relationship with the administrators the common answer is that the 1993 Karnataka Panchayat Act has given too much power to the administrators and down graded the elected PRIs. For instance the 1993 Karnataka panchayat Raj Act states that: "the chief executive officer will be the final authority in executing all matters pertaining to the Zilla panchayat. In addition all financial bills of the Zilla panchayat shall be approved and sanctioned by the Chief executive officer of the Zilla panchayat" (GOK 1993 Act). In the event of disagreement between them and the administrator they find it difficult to carry out small routine works. Compared this with an NGO activist, he/she is more prompt in delivering the services though he/she is not accountable to a elected body.

Asked when how they compare the resource position of PRIs and NGOs the answer particularly at the village level is in favour of NGOs. But when pointed out that the Budget of Zilla Panchayat and State grants to the Panchayat in the range of 15-20 crore rupees the answer of the respondents is "they do not have direct access to such funds and the hierarchical set up and bureaucratic control makes it further difficult even if there is a genuine demand and agreement within the PRI of the village.

TABLE 1

Total Revenue Collection in Tumkur District in 1998 (March)

Sl. Name of the Taluk	Amount Rs	No. of Village Panchayats
1. Tumkur	19,14,434-00	41
2. Gubbi	16,64,362-00	33
3. Kunigal	14,65,787-00	36
4. Tiptur	17,61,205-00	26
5. Truruvakere	19,37,191-00	26
6. Chikkanayakana Halli	16,21,019-00	28
7. Madugiri	18,11,847-00	39
8. Korategere	19,89,621-00	23
9. Pavagada	23,89,020-00	23

10. Sira	16,08,058-00	36
Total	1,80,59,544-00	

TABLE 2

Sl. No.	Taluk	1.4.98 Pending	1998-99 Estimated	Total	Collection April'98
1.	T.Narasipura	4601743	2361584	6963327	2235253
2.	Nanjanaqud	5051904	2373408	7425312	40065
3.	K.R. Nagara	5786694	3374941	9161635	227972
4.	Hiriapattna	2885080	2925966	5811036	233338
5.	Mysore	6065221	4154515	10219736	470684
6.	Hunsur	6378976	2767728	9146704	138628
7.	H.D. Kote	3453564	2568585	6022149	1560
34223182	20526717	54749899	1501963		

The responses of the people who are directly beneficiaries of the Government programmes and NGO programmes over a period of time to the question how they view the PRIs and NGOs are interesting. A good number of people said that NGOs in the initial phase were committed and worked sincerely. However as they established firmly in a particular area the involvement of NGOs show signs of decline or withdrawal in that area. For instance the problem of bonded labour was predominant in H.D. Kote taluk in the seventies and eighties. Even NGOs such as Jivika concentrated on this issue. With the abolition of bonded labour through legislative measures today neither the government officials nor the NGOs those work in the area accept the existence of such a problem. But the tribals and other marginalised communities admit that bonded labour is very much a problem in the area. Even in a meeting a tribal admitted that he is aware of a number of tribals working as bonded labours. But the convenor of the meeting did not like the candid answer to an outsider. In fact it was explained to the researcher that during Ugadhi festival(the new year which comes between late March or early April) people borrow money and offer themselves as labourers for a fixed period. The researcher was told that the now the practice is something like contract labour and not bonded labour exactly. Such a practice is widely prevalent and taking different forms after the abolition of bonded labour by the state government. That appears to be one of the reason the self- help- groups in that area have taken firm roots. Members of these groups help to repay the money and free the person from the contractor. People in the area realize that it is much easier to approach and get the work done through the NGO compared to the PRIs. In the first phase (1987-1991) the PRIs did some useful work but in the second phase, say after a decade, the initiative of the PRIs is gradually declining. Besides, PRIs have their usual hassles and politics. Connections and kinship is more in use rather than identification with the needy. But NGOs always identify with the needy and also create in them a sense of dependency.

The data collection involving NGOs was interesting and provided useful insights. At the official

level NGO functionaries both in Mysore and Tumkur districts did not identify any direct relationship with the PRIs. MYRADA functionaries in H.D. Kote taluk of Mysore district are of the opinion that their programmes such as child centered development and self-help group functions independently and there is no connection with the PRIs. Likewise, they involve in PRI work only when requested by the PRIs. Besides, Myrada has voluntarily constructed community halls, including buildings for the functioning of the PRIs. A distinct feature is the promotion of literacy by sponsoring teaching staff and class rooms.

Organizations such as Fedina Vikasa in H.D. Kote concentrate only with the tribals of H.D.Kote and not with others as is done by Myrada. As noted earlier most of the beneficiaries of Fedina Vikas are of the opinion that the tribals must have their separate panchayats. More than hundred tribals who were interviewed at N.Begur, Kenchana Halli Hunsur and H.D. Kote shared a similar view. Interestingly most of the activists associated with the Fedina Vikasa are also tribals. Therefore it is difficult to obtain two separate opinions.

Another important point that was noted in the course of field work is the concentration of NGOs particularly in backward taluks such as H.D. Kote and Hunsur. The NGOs situated at relatively better developed taluks and urban areas provide a different picture. It is true that the number of NGOs located in and around Mysore is more. Likewise most NGOs are located in the taluk head quarters. MYRADA is the only organisation whose branch offices are in different villages. It may be important to note that in four villages MYRADA and the village Panchayat office is in the same building.

In Tumkur district the most prominent NGO with an all-round impact is REDS. In the course of the field work the following things were noted. The basic thrust of REDS is empowerment of Dalits. REDS unlike MYRADA is doing this in a unique manner. It has a Human Potential Development Programme for the Dalits. It is a four month programme with field and other exposure. In addition to this the Dalit activists have established a Dalit Jagrati Sangha (DJS) which is associated with the REDS. Unlike the self help groups, the DJS is mostly involved in conscientizing.

A further probe revealed that out of the 300 candidates who contested election in 1993, sixty were elected to the PRIs. This is a substantial achievement of a voluntary organisation. As a result REDS is involved in conducting training for the elected members to the PRIs and also conduct review sessions.

The strategy of REDs is clear. It does not want to be involved directly but facilitates change through Dalit Jagurati Sangah and by training more and more Dalits through human potential development programme. There are more than 484 sangas and 2500 trained activists as per the information available at REDS. To quote: "the main focus of HPD is to facilitate the realisation and strengthening of the potential of the participants and making them into community resources. HPD will aim at the evolving of an alternative societal vision and a dalit paradigm of development by the participants."

Apart from the above, insights were obtained by interviewing the activists of other organisation such as Shramik Video Peetha, WLRs, Abhivruddi, BAIF, DEEPA etc. (see appendix).

It is also noted that both in Mysore and Tumkur districts there are one or two NGOs whose budgets are in the range of one to two crore rupees. Besides, there are ten to fifteen NGOs whose budget is in the range of one to ten lakh rupees, a few organisations whose budget is less than rupees one lakh. More importantly some organizations with a clear ideology and strategy and through consistent committed work have been able to make an impact. Small pinpricks and conflicts never bother them now. For the medium NGOs their location and target area is limited. Besides they have no ambition to expand. It is for the newly established NGOs who are not even five years old, confrontation and conflict is a possibility.

To sum up it may be noted that the available data and other insights obtained during the field work points to the fact that the limited financial resources at the command of PRIs and the control of administrators has limited the scope of PRIs. On the other hand, the NGOs corresponding to their financial strength, ideological commitment and other resources have strategised their work in such a way that it does not come into conflict with the PRIs. In case of conflict, it will involve the local people and their associations and not the NGO.

3.5 Functioning of Panchayati Raj Institutions

As noted already the hierarchy of Panchayati Raj Institutions start from District, then to the taluk and rests at the village level. At the district level the Zilla Panchayat consists of forty to fifty five members. Depending on number of taluks and total number of panchayats in each taluk wattage is given to number of representatives. In Mysore district the total number of elected representatives 5870 and in Tumkur Zilla panchayat consist of 4931 remembers . Out of these in Mysore Zilla Panchayat among the members 11 women and 4 belong to Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe. Similarly in Tumkur Zilla Panchayat out of the total members 16 women and 6 belong to Scheduled caste and Scheduled tribe.

Having outlined the broad outline of functioning of PRIs and NGOs in Tumkur and Mysore district here below we take up specific in stances where the issue sustainability and sources of livelihood involved. Further we also note of the reactions of PRIs and NGOs on these issues.

3.6 Denial of Access to Forest and Forest Produce

Nagarhole forest, in Mysore district has been declared as a reserved forest and converted into a National Park by the State government. Earlier, in mid-seventies the State government initiated steps to construct a dam and the Kapila reservoir on the Kambini in the H.D. Kot taluk that also resulted in displacement of nearly fifteen thousand tribals. Thus the tribals were of the region were worst affected people as a result of development initiatives.

In the process a number NGO took up the cause of the affected tribals but the community support remained limited. With increasing pressure from different quarters some measures were initiated to rehabilitate the tribals. But the formal procedure to prove that they owned land and also dependent on the forest was left to the tribals to prove in the process a large number of tribals not only lost access to forest and forest produced but also did not get any benefit from the rehabilitation measures.

Absence of PRIs in the that period further added to the loss of the tribals. But once the PRIs

emerged on the scene in the late eighties the scenario did not change much. In fact the tribals increasingly felt as left out. And this led to their demand for separate tribal panchayat.

When compared with other communities the tribal community in around Nagara Hole forest and H.D. Kote is the most poverty stricken. The disparity between them and other communities is very high on all counts. The tribals have little access and very limited opportunities to earn their livelihood. Whatever the NGOs and government have done is not sufficient to create sustainable sources of livelihood. The local PRIs have not done any special effort to improve the conditions.

3.8 Amalagundi Experience

Amalagundi is a village in Sira taluk of Tumkur district. The contractors carrying out construction work in the district found Amalagundi has good quality sand and started to lift sand on a regular basis from the river banks. This activity became so intense that the number of sand lifted from the river started to affect the flow of the water and there became possibility where river might become shallow. This has the potential of affecting the livelihood of a large number of people.

AKAY a local voluntary organization run by mostly women started to protest lifting of sand by the trucks. The protest became so strong that women resorted to block the road. As a result they got immediate attention and publicity. In fact the participation of people including the PRIs ultimately succeeded in stopping the lifting of the sand.

In fact this is a case where a local NGO could organize protest that attracted support from all sections and led to positive results.

3.9 The Self-help Groups in H.D. Kote

H. D. Kote taluk in Mysore district had the highest number of bonded labourers. Even today the problem is not completely eradicated. A casual talk with a member of a local organization, Budakattu Krishikara Sanga revealed that the problem still exists but people do not talk about it publicly. Besides the system has transformed into annual contract labour and the rate is fixed during the Ughadi festival in April.

For any who visits H.D. Kote it is clear there exists limited banking system and rural credit is a problem. Perhaps, having understood this problem Myrada has been actively involved in promoting rural credit through self-help-groups. And groups are allowed to on any criteria that includes, tribe, caste, gender and also mixed groups.

Every group member saves whatever little he can and the group deposits the amount. Myrada provides an incentive for the savings. The group also processes requests for loan mostly these requests for consumption loan and the amount is much lower. No bank can entertain such a request or it has provision to provide consumption loan.

The survey of self - Help activity will reveal that it is spread among all communities and all strata of the society. In fact flexibility has contributed for homogeneous groups. In fact mixed groups of men and women belonging to a same caste are not successful.

The overall impact of Self-help -groups has cultivated a habit of saving and also helped people from the clutches of money lender. In fact people are more organized and conscious on a number of issues including sustainability. The PRIs are very supportive of Myrada's initiative.

The Human Potential Development In Tumker: The Rural Education for development Society has essentially targets the SCs through its programmes. One of its programme is to develop the human potential of SCs. This is training program that introduce s various components and it has succeeded in training a sizeable section of the SCs in the district.

The trained SCs are encouraged to form their local associations. At the district level they have Dalit Jagurati Sangh. It has branches at all levels.

Chapter -4

Conclusions and Suggestions

With emergence of PRIs on the scene since the beginning of nineties the issue of sustainability and development has been more focused at the grassroots. In fact, development has not been considered the exclusive task of centralized ministries and planning commissions. Development and sustainability has been viewed as the responsibility of the people through the instrumentality of Pries. In fact it has been argued that the development with the emergence of Pries has become " participatory and sustainable through panchayat level development planning.

However in practice one faces many hurdles particularly when one devises strategies to implement programmes promoting development and sustainability. The specific socio-economic conditions, the context and the availability of sources play an important role. In this context the experiences between PRIs and NGOs while promoting development and sustainability may be noted as follows:-

i) the possibility for linkages between the PRIs and NGOs is more when there exist some kind of homogeneity. For instance, it is much easier to organize a land owning peasant community to fight for degradation or diversion of water resources. Whereas same kind of support may not be forth coming from the land owning and peasant communities when the issue shifts to accessibility to forest and forest produced for the tribals. For this the tribals have to fight alone. In fact, the same kind of attitude is reflected when the question of relation between PRIs and NGOs that work with the tribals. More importantly, in such cases the NGOs do not succeed in influencing the PRIs to take up the cause of tribals. Similarly the possibility for a united fight through the participation of all local communities is limited

In situation like this if the strategy is to organise all sections of people through an activity like rural credit through self- help- groups seems to advantages. While maintaining disparities and caste feelings of high and low in tact the NGO has more chances of having a positive relation with the local PRIs.

ii) the possibility for linkages between the PRIs and NGOs also exist when the NGO take up a development initiative that involves all sections of people and the beneficiaries belong to all strata of the society. For instance, in H.D. Kote taluk Myrada initiative to promote rural credit through self-help-groups has succeeded as it has permitted people to form self-help-groups on the basis of caste, tribe, gender and profession. High and low feeling among castes is reality. It is also prevalent among women and sometimes the degree is more. However, the success of self-help groups is creating a positive impact. Today the people of this area have access to credit facilities. Besides, the experience of self-help groups has inculcated a sense of saving and organization for common good. It has also been a educative process. In the H.D.Kote region no PRI can ignore Myriad totally. It is true that by ignoring a NGO there is no loss for the PRI. However, a good number of members of PRIs in H.D. Kote have directly or indirectly benefited through the developmental activities of Myrada. It becomes clear for an observer that Myrada has a local character and a long history of involvement in promoting development initiatives in that area. This positive record is helping Myrada to have a better equation with local PRIs.

iii) It is also noted that when NGOs target their development initiative to a particular community the community must have sizable population (20-30% of the total population) so that it can have its presence felt in the PRIs. For instance, the Rural Education for Development Society (REDS) in Tumkur district targets its activities for the SCs. The district also has more than 30 per cent SC population. REDS has succeeded in influencing the SCs through its human potential development programme and organization through Dalit Jaguar Sangah. In fact it is revealed that in Tumkur district nearly 66 PRI members during last five years came in contact with REDS activities directly or indirectly. In a way their presence in the PRI helps REDS to have better interaction and also to forge linkages with the PRIs. The experience of such linkages also helps to promote development and sustainability through its programme. This is particularly true in a dry district like Tumkur where scarcity and demand for water is high. Therefore, alternatives have to be promoted in the form of bore wells, and water tanks. But caste feeling often obstruct such initiatives.

iv) It is also noted that the chances of success of development initiatives and sustainability are more where there are strong linkages between the NGOs and PRIs. For instance, where there are no linkages between PRIs and NGOs the community involvement is very low. Besides the functioning of PRIs fails to bring all communities together or participation of people.

v) There are also instances where the possibility for linkages between the PRIs and NGOs emerge as a result of common experiences of struggle on issues affecting majority of the people. This has been noted through the experiences of AKAY in Amalagundi in Sira taluk of Tumkur district and also in adjacent villages of Bagur Navillae connecting the river Hemavathi through a canal to tumkur district.

The above mentioned inferences are tentative. More details have to be collected particularly of incidents involving development and sustainability and role of NGOs and PRIs in each case. What we have at this stage is preliminary data and limited understanding.

Nonetheless a few suggestions may be noted for the success of development and sustainability and also for the emergence of strong linkages between PRIs and NGOs at the grassroots:-

i) while promoting development and sustainability at the grass roots the opportunities for linkages between NGOs are more if there is involvement and participation of local associations such as youth associations, Mahila Mandals, Lions and Rotary clubs, cultural associations. This kind of involvement creates opportunities for local NGO activists to become members of PRIs and also use the advantageous of their skills.

ii) there must be a base line survey conducted before launching a development or sustainability initiative so that there is elementary understanding of disparities among communities.

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Appendix

Do you consider NGO have a role in the PRIs?

Yes.....35
No.....25
Do not know.....40

Do you consider there is any conflict between the PRIs and NGOs?

Yes.....20
No.....60
Do not know.....20

Is there a positive difference when NGO activists become representatives in the PRIs?

Yes.....80
No 15
Cannot say.....5

Whether NGOs play a role during election of representatives to the PRIs?

Yes.....30
No.....55
Cannot say.....15

Whether PRIs seek cooperation from NGOs?

Yes.....38
No.....52
Do not know.....10

Whether NGOs seek co-operation from the PRIs?

Yes.....24
No.....48
Do not know.....38

Whether is a competition between PRIs and NGOs for financial resources from the government agencies?

Yes.....73
No 18
Cannot say.....9

What are the areas in your opinion possible areas of conflicts?

selection of beneficiaries, competition for finances, when NGOs side with a particular section in cases of conflicts, When the NGOs conscientise people before the election. When NGOs take keen interest to expose the bureaucracy and elected representatives involving corruption cases.

What are the major contribution of NGOs in your are?

Self-help groups, information dissemination, conscientisation, initiating organisation, focus on weaker sections.

APPENDIX - I

NAMES OF SOME PROMINENT NGO IN TUMKUR DISTRICT

1. BIRDS

Huliyur 572 218
C.N. Halli Taluk
Tumkur District.

2. W.L.A.R.S.

Near T.V.V. College
Gowribidanur Road
Madhugiri - 572 132
Tumkur District

3. A.K.A.Y.

Aamalagondi
Seebiagrahara Post 572 125
Sira Taluk
Tumkur District

4. ABHIVRUDHI

NO. 1064, Behind PHC
K.H.B. Colony
Gubbi 572 216
Tumkur District

H.D.S.

Ponnasamudra
Ponnasamudra Post 561 202
Pavagada Taluk
Tumkur District

6. MAHILA MUKTIVAHINI
C/O. Sri Bheemaiah
Retired Ameen, Near Dodhi Ghat
Garden Road
S.I.T. Extension
Tumkur 572 102.
7. DEEPA
Venkatapura 572 202
Bajagoor post
Tiptur Taluk
Tumkur District
8. Sharnik Vidya Peeth
D.C. Office
Tumkur
9. President
DALIT JAGRUTI SAMITHI
Aralepet Main Road
Tumkur 572 101
10. REDS
Director
Shantinagar
S.S. Puram PO
Tumkur 572 102
11. Sarvodaya College
Yediyar Road
Tiptur 572 201
Tumkur District
12. Marasa Rural Development
Guidance and Education Centre
(MRDGEC)
SEEGEBAGI 572 218
C.N. Halli Taluk
Tumkur District.

APPENDIX - II

NAMES OF SOME PROMINENT NGOS IN MYSORE DISTRICT

1. Project Director
R.L.H.P.
170, Gayathripuram 2nd Phase
Udayagiri
Mysore 570 019.
2. ANEDSA
129 1st Stage, A Block
J.P. Nagar
Mysore 570 008.
3. Rural Community Based Health Project
Holdsworth Memorial Mission Hospital
P.B. 38
Mysore 570 001.
4. CORD
Behind Inspection Bunglow
Kushalnagar
Kodagu District
5. Secretary
DEED
Hunsur 571 105
Mysore District
6. AWMD
Udayagiri Extension
Mysore 571 114
7. Project Officer
MYRADA Plan
H.D. Kote Hand Post
H.D. Kote 571 114
Mysore District
8. Mahila Samakya
976 Geetha Road
Chamarajapuram
Mysore

9. Director
V.G.K.K.
B.R. Hills
Via. Chamarajanagar
Mysore.
10. Coordinator
Fedina - Vikasa
H.B. Road
H.D. Kote - 571 114 Mysore District
11. Pragathi
570, E - Block
16th Main
J.P. Nagar
Mysore.
12. Neelaiah
PMSR
P.B. NO.19
G.P. Mallappapuram
Kollegal 571 440
13. SUMANA
Block No. C - 10
Alanhalli Layout
Mysore.
14. Odanadi Seva Trust (Regd)
No.1293, 12th Cross
E & F Block
Ramakrishna Nagar
Mysore 570 022.
15. GUARD
Project Director
H.N. 5, II Stage
1st Cross, NIE Polytechnic
College Road
Industrial Suburb
Vishweshwara Nagar
Mysore.

Appendix IV

Individual Interviews:

In this section we briefly note some the reactions of the individuals. These interviews were conducted by the researcher personally in the local language during the course of the field work in October- November 1998 in the districts of Mysore and Tumkur.

1. Ansiyamma: Currently she is an elected representative of the PRI and a member of the local women's association. In her view the local PRI institution has given her an opportunity to relate herself as representative women and the people of her ward. She is clear in her answers. The women's association had a very limited role and occassional. Finances were always a problem. The women's association was always wanted to do something but there difficulties even to do small things. Functionaries and officials were less concerned when you approach as a representative of a women's association. Besides, the sections of the society that participate in womens' association were limited and constrained by their socio-economic status.

But this is not so with a PRI member. It is much easier if the person concerned also happens to be a member of local association. The experiences of a local association benefits a person. Asked about the nature of relationship between the PRIs and NGOs, The local associations in Belagola region are financially weak. Their position is much weaker when compared to the PRIs. But when the local associations and PRIs join together, it helps each other and the task is done in a much better way. But often they come across local political influences. If the area happens to be dominated by landowning and some small scale industries as is the case with Hulikere and Belagola then things get further complicated.

What are the problems faced by the PRIs? It is money. At times local political equations. Often it is the caste conflicts. Sometimes the initiatives promoted by the local associations. What kind of role the PRIs and NGOs have? There is no formal relations between them. Most of the time both function independently. The influence of associations and NGOs is limited.

What kind of future you see for the PRIs and NGOs? Both PRIs and NGOs face financial problems at present in the area. Unless PRIs are provided with financial powers their role will be limited. But still PRIs are better compared to the Local associations and NGOs.

Personally being a woman what are your experiences? I have benefited by the local women's associations initially. However the PRIs are totally different. It is linked with administrative and political setup. But being a woman often I find difficulty in adjusting to the demands of the political situations and also the people who support you and also.

Veera Badrayya:

Veera Badrayya belongs to a tribal community of H.D. Kote. He has been working with NGOs as well as experiences of working with local government agencies at various levels. As far as tribals are concerned he is clear it is the NGOs that have come to their place. Often they feel

neglected and treated discriminately without understanding their background and culture and other practices. Most of the development initiatives including education to the tribals fails to take care of the tribal culture. For a tribal child it is common to roam in the forest, climb trees, etc. In other words, the surroundings in which they live and grow are different. When he is put into a school he is expected to forget all this. The books, lessons and pictures that has to be studied in the school by a tribal child do not figure in his vocabulary.

Similarly local PRIs do not understand the problems of the tribals. Majority of the people do not listen or even ask the tribals their opinions. It is not to say tribals have no interest in the PRIs. The problem is the system does not understand the tribals, their practices and culture.

They need a different kind of Panchayats. Karnataka has not enacted such an act as is done by Madhya Pradesh. There is a need for such an act.

The NGOs have done some good work. In the beginning their interaction was limited. Now it is covering most of the tribals of the region and all issues such as education, health, legal aid, government schemes, etc., come through the NGOs.

The important thing one can notice over a period of time in region is tribals of H.D. Kote are increasingly brought for the social interaction from their forest dwellings. In the seventies there was hardly any interaction between tribals and non-tribals. It gradually began in the early eighties. The NGOs were instrumental for the initiation. SO was the case with a sympathetic district administration.

A few NGOs like Fedina Vikasa, a federation of tribal peoples have initially focused their activities only with the tribals of N. Begur in H.D. Kote. There are Number of "hadis" (hamlets). Each Hadi has its own Yajamana. He is consulted in most decisions and activities of the Hadi. Even the NGOs have to approach through the Hadi Yajamana for any work that has to be carried out.

Over the years the feelings of the tribal people vis-a vis the NGOs have not remained constant. They are changing. So also the expectations. As the tribals increase their interaction with other social groups and gradually limit their dependency on the forest they find difficulty in leading a normal life.

In such circumstances the role PRIs and NGOs vis-a-vis the tribals increasingly becoming unsatisfactory. The district administration and local level Taluk and village panchayat level administration dominated by non-tribals often found to be insensitive to the needs and expectations of the tribals.

(i) Nanjundaiah:

Nanjundaiah is the co-ordinator of Fedina Vikasa, an NGO located in Heggade Deva Kote (H.D. Kote) taluk of Mysore district and working in the region for more than a decade. The focus of Fedina Vikasa is mainly the tribal people living in different parts of the H.D.Kote. Nanjundaiah has been associated with the tribals of the region for more than a decade through the activities of

Fedina Vikasa. When I requested him to share some information about Fedina Vikasa, its work, experiences and the relationship with local PRIs. He, however, told me the tribals are a better source of information rather than he answering the questions. I agreed. The following day I went again and attended a meeting in which the participants were mostly tribals associated with Fedina Vikasa. The meeting was called to discuss the newly formed Buda Kattu Krishikara Sanga, an association of tribals involved in agriculture. Nanjundaiah was present in the meeting.

After observing the proceedings and listening to the tribals for more than an hour Nanjundaiah introduced me and asked me to interact with them. I asked a few questions. The women in the group were most vocal and showed keen interest in answering and sharing information. For me, on the other hand, it was much easier to interact as I needed no interpreter. Tribals were unanimous in their opinion that the work of the Fedina Vikasa has benefitted them, though the intensity of its work and commitment has seen ups and down. Through Fedina they have been trained, encouraged to organise at various levels.

More importantly, their life style is changing. So also their daily routine and dependency on the forest. But they are finding difficulty to maintain a balance between continuity and change. This dilemma puts their survival under threat. If they come out of the forest and depend on the government and its schemes and assistance from other sources they have realised that is insufficient for their survival. At the same time they come across a few people both in government and voluntary organisations genuinely concerned and interested in their betterment. Their initiatives tempt them. However to overcome all the difficulties often a big challenge for them. The few examples of those who opted for change community life styles are not encouraging for many. Cases of individual suffering are on the increase in the absence of community support.

The attitude of local PRIs towards the tribals is of indifference. Majority in the PRIs are concerned in their caste and community interests and involved in their local politics and safeguarding their individual and community interests. The betterment of tribals is hardly discussed seriously. The tribals are gradually losing their interests in such PRIs. Their demand is to have separate tribal panchayat as is the case in Madhya Pradesh and in North Eastern states. They have been raising this demand. So far the government has not enacted the appropriate legislation.

The issue among the tribals, local PRIs and NGOs exclusively focusing on the betterment of tribals has not resulted in major conflicts. Partly because the tribals in H. D. Kote taluk are most backward. Worst perhaps most of them are landless bonded labourers. They live in isolated and separate "hadis" located on the boundaries of forest land.

Any effort to solve their problems may not have any impact on the locals. More importantly all these efforts are a drop in the ocean. It appeared that the tribals are not happy with their present state. Fedina Vikasa's effort are also not successful.

(ii) Dasae Gowda:

Dasae Gowda is the section officer of H.D. Kote Myrada (Mysore Rehabilitation and Development Agency) branch and has been working for more than a decade. The main activity of

Myrada at present is cultivating the habit of savings and generating rural credit through self- help groups. Myrada has done very effective work on this count and the results are very encouraging. When visited a number of times both the H.D. Town Panchayat and the office of Myriad every time there were more people at the office of Myriad than in the office of town panchayat. The reason is simple Myriad was more use to the people through its community centered activities.

Dasae Gowda convinced me that they have very little to do with the local PRIs. They are not interested in any relationship either. Their activities are also independent of PRI involvement and interaction. But they often come across village level politics that crops up in their self -help groups and results in conflicts. Further election time is again a period the voluntary agencies are targeted for conscientising the local people which is not liked by the political groups.

Why Myrada has been successful and work independently of PRIs. Myrada came to H.D. Kote much before the PRIs. Myrada was there in early eighties. Its track record has helped it. Its conscious decision to promote self help groups further defined its role. In other words PRIs could initiate or compete with the kind of work carried out by Myrada. Its contribution towards rural primary education in H.D. Kote, its activities to promote female literacy, child centered development, least benefited families all have yielded results. Such a record has encouraged it to go alone.

But can such a policy to go alone be pushed any further? Dasae gowda was a bit non-committal. But he was clear the activities of Myrada are not increasing in areas where there is sufficient development in terms of community facilities, schools, and literacy credit facilities. Myrada is slowly withdrawing from such areas. thus providing scope for the PRIs to carry forward the already initiated work. Unfortunately such a thing, he adds is not happening. PRIs at the local level are still dominated by the land owning sections and the strength of newly empowered sections is not matching. In cases of conflicts, the loss of newly empowered sections is more than the land owning dominating sections. As a result often one comes across passivity and indifference at the PRI level.

What about the other NGOs working in the region? Myrada has the advantage of being the oldest NGO in the region. Besides the kind of work it could carry out since the beginning has given a good lead. So others have to follow its activities. A few others who do not follow start something different and focus their activities on a particular section such as bonded labourers, agriculture, tribals etc. Initially there were efforts to coordinate the activities among the NGOs working in the region Myrada was part of it. But gradually Myrada has withdrawn from such initiatives. On the other hand it is the newly emerging NGOs in region, take note of Myrada's activities including the government functionaries at the village, taluk and district level.

(iii) Jyothi Raj:

Jyothi Raj heads REDs an NGO located in Tumkur district. Unlike other NGO Reds has its own identity through its focus and activities. Reds primary focus is the Dalits. Through its involvement and experience in Tumkur it has developed its own strategies and programmes for empowerment of Dalits. Among these the Human Potential Development programmes and the formation of local Sangas (local associations). And the establishment of Dalit Jagutati Sangah(DJS)

PRIs is a recent concern for the Reds. In its decade old involvement its main focus has been the rural Dalits, their conscientisation and organisation through Dalit Jagurati Sangah. However the trained activists of local DJS have taken keen interest in the PRIs.

In 1993 when elections were conducted after amending the existing law to bring conformity with 73rd constitutional amendment Reds conducted a pre-election training for the possible candidate and others to disseminate information on the emerging role of PRIs. Later it also conducted a training for the elected members to the PRIs. And more recently in 1998 July August it conducted district and state level training programmes and evaluated the experiences of PRI members during the last five years, i.e., 1993-1998.

On the Whole Reds is actively involved in strengthening the PRIs at different levels through workshops, training, evaluation programmes. But its effective work is done through human potential development programmes that train the dalits through a four month duration residential intensive programme and the activities of DJS.

The role of Reds and DJS is not apolitical. But its political role has a clear ideological orientation i.e., Ambedker ideology and its constituency is the Dalits. Conflicts and difference of opinion are therefore natural. But such conflicts and differences are tackled by the activists, DJS more than Reds. But all three collectively deal with them also.

PRIs alone cannot perform the task of empowerment. No section in the PRIs is genuinely committed to the empowerment of the Dalits. It is here the role of NGOs should be located and linked with the PRIs. The process of change is gradual. there are many hurdles and enemies to the PRIs than to the NGOs.

What mechanism can we use to solve the conflicts between the PRIs and NGOs. It is mainly the strategies of NGOs that handle the conflicts. It is much difficult for the NGO to carry out genuine committed work. It is only experience that can provide insights. But in any conflict it is the local constituency that is going to evaluate and value the services of the NGOs and PRIs. The weaker sections such as Dalits and women feel more comfortable with the NGOs rather than with PRIs initially. Once they experience the attitude of PRIs and NGOs to their capacity to solve their problems ascertain understanding exists in taming the people. Thus to a large extent the role of NGOs and PRIs needs no interpretation. For instance, Myrada is identified with self help groups and PRIs are always approached when land disputes and land related matters arise.

(iv) Gangadhar:

Gangadhar heads Shramik Vidyapeeth at Tumkur district. The interesting thing about this organization is it is run by Human Resource Development Ministry of the Central Government. Gangadhar is involved in networking with a number of NGOs both at Tumkur and other districts of Karnataka. Gangadhar has also taken keen interest in the PRIs. This actually is most interesting aspect and a rare combination in one person.

I met him in training programme organised for the elected members to the PRIs and other

activists interested in PRIs. Gangadhar was one of the resource person. His approach and commitment to strengthen PRIs convinced me that he has better insights.

Gangadhar places the NGOs working in the Tumkur districts in different categories. Those established and having a better resource position. Those in the medium category depended on the well established NGOs and copy their strategies and programmes. Lastly, recently established NGOs that struggle to make an impact. Among these few genuinely committed and few partially committed and a few are there simply because they manage to get funds through various sources. Further, their commitment towards the PRIs is also not uniform. Most NGOs were hesitant to relate themselves with the PRIs initially. Local politics and political parties and the fear of antagonising the dominating sections always keep away the NGOs from associating with the PRIs. However, the need for training before and after election, dissemination of information about the role and functions of PRIs, reservation of one third of the seats to women have gradually brought closer the NGOs with the PRIs.

But still it is not clear whether the NGOs will be able to associate with the PRIs. Apart from this a section of the NGOs particularly those depended exclusively committed activists realise that one's a person becomes a representative of the PRI he/she gradually disassociate from the NGO with which he/she was working. Further, political and other local leadership aspirations also changes him/ her. Therefore, there are instances in which NGOs do not like their full time activists contesting elections to the PRIs and becoming peoples representatives. NGOs like to maintain their apolitical role. This is where the role of NGOs needs to be questioned.

Further the role of NGOs, its activists is closely scrutinised during elections to various representative bodies at the national state, district, taluk and village level. Depending on the likes of the elected representatives and control over the bureaucracy the local NGOs are subtly controlled. Thus depending on the already noted categorisation and strength NGOs define their role vis-a vis the PRIs.

It is also clear from the past experiences that the bureaucracy as well as the MLAs do not take lightly any challenge to their established traditional roles particularly from the PRIs. As a result it is a challenge for the NGOs to what extent they can defy such resistance. But the strength of the NGO in such circumstance comes from the support of the people. Well established and committed NGO like Reds may not bother any of these resistance. Further, a well conscientised association like the Dalit Jagurati Sangh(DJS), may not be told what political stand it should take during elections. Naturally it is the politicians and the bureaucrats have to come to such NGOs in the event of a political conflict or a caste conflict.

Thus the nature of relationship between the PRIs and NGOs depends on the specific local circumstances. Besides, the strategies and creditability of the NGO in the eyes of local people help it to define the relationship in the event of political pressure or a conflict.

(v) Chairperson of Kestur PRI, in Tumkur

She is a lady of less than thirty and always accompanied by her husband who works in the same village panchayat as a clerk. Practically it was impossible for me to separate the two and

interview them separately. Whenever a question asked the answer always would come from the husband. A number of times I had to stop the husband but his position in the PRI gave him an authoritative role and naturally he knew more than his wife.

Being a chairperson of the PRI she has to attend complaints everyday. She does not like such a role. The husband added it is difficult to attend to the complaints and they never end. There is no money. We expected something different. Now we feel that there is not much headache at the taluk panchayat level. So next time we won't contest election from the village panchayat.

What kind of role and relationship you expect from the local NGOs? They create more problems. They demand more. They come with problems. They ask for solutions. They do not understand our difficulties. It is very difficult to work with them.

What problems you see at the PRIs in your village. There is more politics. Some time it is caste. Sometime it is purely personal rivalry. Sometime it is benefits to one section. Sometimes it is difficult to gather minimum number of elected members for meetings. Since there is no money nothing can be done. As a result people lose interest in the PRIs.

It is the backwardness of the village, caste composition and the local politics that decides the success of the village PRIs. But members also make a difference. Women have their difficulties. Men do not listen to women. They do not take interest in the PRIs when presiding person happens to be a woman. It is here nobody works at the village level except the NGOs who work for them and help them.

(vi) Sidda Gowda:

Panchayat member in Navelle Halli of Chikka Nayakana Halli. Sidda Gowda is clear in his views. The present PRI system when compared to the system prevailed during 1987-1991 was no better. There was more money and more powers to the PRIs particularly under the Mandal panchayat system. More work was done such as land distribution, construction of houses and other small village irrigation etc. Under the present system there is no such scope. Everything is dependent on the bureaucrats including sanction of travel and other allowances.

However the plus point in the present system is the reservation for the backward castes and reservation in the post of presiding officers. This was not there in the earlier Act. Financial powers have been limited drastically. This has put the role of PRIs to insignificance and therefore it has to be rectified. He also cited a number of practical difficulties in carrying out small repair work like repair of street lights without the sanction of money and prior approval.

The NGOs have helped a lot by way of training and disseminating information about the role of PRIs. They have also helped in training women and effective participation in the PRIs. Further, regular workshops and evaluation of PRI experiences, NGOs have been helpful in conducting. This has helped the elected representatives to identify issues at the village level and also understand village politics critically in the context of caste equation and domination.

NGOs have also inspired a people at the local level to initiate voluntary initiatives to carry

forward the work along with the PRIs as only few can become elected representatives. While NGO and voluntary initiatives can carry forward their work for a longer period without a break. Whereas the work of PRIs often faces breaks and ups and down with tenures, elections and administrative decisions.

(vii) Nagaraj:

Nagaraj is an NGO activist working for the Myrada. Presently he is associated with the N.Begur office of Myrada. This office is located in the building where the N.Begur PRI offices are located. As a place N. Begur is the most difficult to approach. But the fact that most of the tribals are located in this area and some of the prominent NGOs started their work in this area I was determined to reach. The travel was difficult in jam packed jeep. At least twenty people for nearly more than an hour covering around thirty to thirty- five kilometers from hand post. While my interaction was mainly informal Nagaraj shared the following information. N. Begur is the most backward village in H.D. Kote taluk. If it seen development it is mainly because of the initiative take by the district collector of Mysore Brahamma Dutta. He was instrumental in initiating a change in the life of tribals of N.Begur. Today, the place is where the boundaries of forest are laid and some of the dwelling units for the tribals are located is known as Brahammagiri, a tribute to the collector. Since then N.Begur has seen a number of NGOs starting their work among the tribals and others. Some have succeeded and some have failed and left.

Myrada's concerns are mainly community concerns. Among these self help groups for inculcating the incentive of savings has made a impact and benefited the tribals most. It is because Myrada has given a matching contribution for the money saved by the self help groups. Further, Myrada has constructed school buildings and sponsored the expenditure of school teachers. Further, children are provided with uniforms, books, bicycles and fees. Girl child has been a target group of for literacy initiatives.

People have responded to the initiatives of Myrada positively. Besides Myrada works among all communities. It has smoothened the resistance even though a section of people do not like bonded labourers becoming independent and money lenders losing their business and hold in the village. Similarly bureaucracy at the district and taluk level has been impressed by the work done by Myrada. Often Myrada has taken help from the bureaucracy to resolve local level conflicts. These conflicts arise particularly when beneficiaries are identified to distribute government land and help is given to construct dwelling units. Most of the beneficiaries are landless or the bonded labourers, tribals, scheduled caste. The dominant landowning upper caste oppose such initiatives as they loose hold over the government land which is used as private land by them for centuries.

On the question of local politics Nagaraj, being NGO employee appears to be indifferent an attitude very much visible in the functioning of Myrada. Myrada at the local level ie., at the village does not conduct any training programmes before after panchayat elections, though it has a office at the village. But it organises training to impart its philosophy and spread of self help groups. Further, Myrada extends financial support whenever genuine proposals for development are referred to. Myrada has a policy to this effect. Besides Myrada gives financial assistance to the extent of 25 percent of the total cost or some times even more. The kind of works generally undertaken are construction of community halls at the villages that are often used as meeting

place for the self help groups, digging of borewells, or bus stands or construction of dwelling units for the homeless and landless.

Nagaraj is not happy with the way things are going in the PRIs. He has complaints. Women members, he sees as ineffective. Women panchayat members are often illiterate and often do not speak in the PRI meetings. Therefore members of PRIs must have some educational qualifications. In addition the members of PRIs must undergo compulsory training. Above all he is disappointed by the politics in the PRIs, particularly in the selection of beneficiaries to various government schemes.

Likewise, NGOs and voluntary initiatives are unable to sustain their highly publicized initiatives of empowerment in the long-term. Myrada could be an exception because it uses a different strategy. NGOs that focus on a particular section or target a particular community such as bonded labourers, peasants, tribals, scheduled castes, have failed to make an impact. They find it difficult when dominant section resists their activities by bringing pressure and resistance in an organised form. PRIs are often used for this. Even elected representatives do not hesitate to scuttle the initiatives through their non-cooperation in identifying beneficiaries for the various government schemes.

An NGO can only succeed in such circumstances only on the strength of its committed support base. This support base can be created only through genuine committed work that benefits the people directly.

But the fact there is lot remains to be done through the PRIs and the PRIs at present are no position to bring the expected results on their own. It is here the NGOs have extended their cooperation to work. In the long run definitely the NGOs and the PRIs have to work together. And for the NGOs, it is their commitment and voluntary initiatives and not any political gain or political power.

• (ix) Radha Achari:

Radha Achari is the training coordinator at Handpost main office of Myrada. I had along interview with him. When asked whether there is a conflict between the PRIs and NGOs? A firm no was his answer. He further elaborated why there should not be any conflict. He gave examples in case of continuous conflict and no NGO is in position to carry out its work. It is the NGO that has to compromise and strategise its role. Initially, it is a difficult task but it is always the people who decide whether the NGO is doing any work for them. By it is our experience people have not set any measuring rod but they have supported the NGO initiatives even if it is some benefit for them or to the local community. In such scenario people always welcome any NGO initiatives. That is why there are so many local associations, clubs apart from formal developmental NGOs.

He also added as long as NGOs keep away from politics they have little trouble. But if they identify with any political group then there is trouble at different level. However some of the works are exclusively carried out by NGOs. Take for example training of elected representatives. Political parties have not taken up this issue at all. Bureaucracy is not interested in it. It has been left to the NGOs and voluntary organisations to train the elected representatives of PRIs.

Similarly there are few political pressure groups that can really champion the cause of PRIs on the basis of practical experiences and evaluation studies. Like it or not the role of NGOs and voluntary agencies is more apolitical rather than political. This role to great extent avoids conflicts and defines the role of NGOs vis-a-vis the PRIs as complimentary. This has been the opinion of most trainees during the last few years.

The content of training programmes mostly the information dissemination and what an effective PRI can do for the progress of the village. Further the strength of the PRIs also depends on the strength of its elected representatives to some extent. This were the NGOs have an important role in shaping and empowering the PRIs.

On the problems at the village that needs urgent attention is promotion of productive income generating activities. At the village level agriculture being the dominant activity NGOs must study and strategise their initiatives to benefit all sections of the society. Myrada is doing this by generating rural credit particularly keeping mind the crop pattern, seasons of cultivation, availability of labour and daily wages etc. Trainings are conducted to train the representatives take note of these things. It becomes much easier when the PRI and NGO co-operate with each other. In Karnataka there number government schemes and programmes that are designed for implementation particularly at the village level. The NGOs are often asked by the government agencies to implement these programmes and schemes. This role of NGOs has a potential in shaping the relationship between the PRIs and NGOs. In recent years government agencies are preferring more and more NGOs and voluntary agencies for promoting initiatives such as literacy programmes.

Bettaiah Kote:

Bettaiah Kote is more associated with the Dalit Sangarsh Samiti as well as PRIs at H.D. Kote. Interaction with revealed the following information. The NGOs and voluntary agencies have preached high ideals for preaching and implementation. Their work over a period of time in H.D. Kote reveals lots of ups and down. They have managed to obtain financial resource from many source thus they are better off than the village panchayat and also free from bureaucratic controls and hurdles. The autonomy gives them lot of freedom and scope to move fast than the PRIs. But the experience at H.D. Kote shows that the NGOs are also gradually becoming like government agencies. People have to complete lot paper work and permission and approvals are insisted from branch office to section office and from section office head office. The accounts of NGOs are always maintained with secrecy.

Nonetheless due credit should be given for the work they done. The vast network of Myrada in H.D. Kote has been successful in introducing a sense of savings. Likewise the availability of rural credit has helped a lot particularly the women to involve in income generating activities. More importantly a large number of bonded labourers have informally used the benefits of rural credit to buy their freedom after making full payments to their landlords. Likewise a large number of women have encouraged education of their children. All this could not have been achieved without the initiative of voluntary agencies. Even today one hardly come across such initiatives originating from the PRIs. The problem of bonded labourers is the most prevalent problem in H.D.Kote. Formally it has been abolished. But even today it exists in the region in different forms.

Even the elected representatives of PRIs may not accept that have bonded labourers but a close study will provide proof of the fact that such a system prevails even today. The name has changed from bonded labour to contract labour. In the months March- April an amount is fixed for a years labour or for an amount due a years labour is demanded. To avoid legal complications and punishment a system has been evolved of which the bureaucracy is well aware.

When such problems exist then it is the NGOs and voluntary agencies are in a best position to find a solution through their innovative region specific strategies. It is a known fact that the government has always formulated policies however such policies implementation depends on the bureaucracy and government machinery. In H.D. Kote taluk it is the NGOs and voluntary agencies that are promoting education. Even after fifty years of independence the state and its machinery has not been able bring education to most villages. Some serious efforts are made but the school building teaching staff has been inadequate. This inadequacy has been tackled to large extent by the NGOs in

H.D.Kote

What actually is required to strengthen the PRIs. The problems of each district vary. But one can find the Dalits, tribals, minorities and other weaker sections are the most backward. The system has to large extent failed to look into the problems of these sections. it is here the PRIs have to make a difference. given the fact that The NGOs are also make the above mentioned groups as their target groups their should be a clear understanding between the on the commonality of strategies. Now that Dalit Sangarsh Samiti has been a state level organisation and there are other similar organisations and NGOs committed to the cause of Dalits all of them should come together to train the Dalits to participate in the PRIs. Such an initiative may have wider impact.

Interaction with Bureaucracy:

During the field work I had interaction with the bureaucracy at three levels. At the village level, at the taluk level and at the Zilla panchayat level. At the village level there is a secretary to the panchayat and there is a office. At the taluk level there is office with a Block Development Officer and there are more than twenty seven sections in the taluk Panchayat Office. The taluk panchayat office has all the information in terms of revenue collection and the progress of implementation of various schemes and government programmes. The bureaucrats and the elected members of taluk panchayats have separate offices. the segregation itself separates the two. At the district level there is a separate Zilla panchayat office. There is chief Executive officer to the Zilla panchayat. Under him the Zilla panchayat bureaucracy functions. Further there are separate sections for revenue collection, planning and implementation. The hold of the bureaucracy over the Zilla panchayat is complete as the Chief Executive officer has the power to sanction all the financial and allowance bills.

When approached the offices of Mysore Zilla panchayat I was provided with only published and printed material. The senior officers were critical about illiterates and ladies occupying seats of chairperson. Their complaint was people are unable to carry out their functions. bureaucrats cannot be subservient to illiterates and ignorants, When pointed out a similar situation at state and national level there was no sharp response.

Collection of revenues is a problem. PRIs have no money to give salaries. therefore minimum development work is carried out. PRIs at the village level also have minimum powers interm controlling land, minerals and forest produces. At the taluk level the common complaint is the finances and utilisation of government schemes. Though the reports provided are impressive it is difficult to obtain a clear picture as most figures of implementation are in percentage and aggregates.

At the village it is difficult to find the secretary in the office. In most PRIs he comes only according to his convenience and that too for few hours. But he comes always when he has prior information of the visit of a district or taluk level official to the PRI to collect certain specific information often related to revenue collection. Besides the location of the panchayat office also influences the presence of the village panchayat secretary. For instance, most of the PRI offices in H.D. Kote taluk in Mysore District and also in Pavagada taluk of Tumkur district distance-wise are far off places from district headquarters. The transport facilities and condition of the road are very poor. So one can find the PRI office open only in the morning. However, if it is located on main road with regular bus service and close to the district head quarter one may find the village secretary often. I deliberately avoided visiting such urban village panchayats. But the experience particularly in H.D. Kote, Hunsur, T.N. Narasipura, Pavagada and Sirsi taluks was very disappointing. I visited a number of villages in H.D. Kote taluk the most backward taluk in Mysore district but could meet very few village panchayat secretaries in their office.

It is almost clear that the bureaucracy was not happy with the 1987 act that gave supremacy to the elected representatives and greater financial powers. The complaints of illiteracy ignorance of elected representatives was subtle criticism to establish the supremacy of bureaucracy. At the same time why is that the schools, public distribution system, revenue collection and improvement of roads and bus service is not improving particularly in remote most backward villages in spite of keen interest of the elected representatives is mainly due to non-cooperation of the bureaucracy either by denying financial support or due to lack supervision and direction. But the bureaucracy is not prepared to accept such a reality.

When it is pointed out to the district planning and implementation officer of Mysore district the problem of bonded labourers and its new form the annual contract labour system he was very clear there are no bonded labourers. Even a similar position held by the NGOs working in the area. But an interaction among the tribals clearly established that there are bonded labourers in H.D. Kote taluk. The problem is that neither bonded labourers nor the land owner who employs the bonded labourers are in position to admit such a reality. The truth surfaces only when family members ask for loans particularly from the self help groups and the group insists for the reason before sanction the loan. Thus it is the informal system admits the problem and its continuation. Neither bureaucracy nor the PRI system willing to do anything to solve the problem. Therefore, the NGOs are encouraged by the bureaucracy.

Most of the revenues are utilised to provide salaries and allowances of the bureaucracy. Except for the schools there are very few visible development activities that can provide some employment opportunities particularly at the village level to the rural youth. One comes across several such initiatives in the annual reports brought out by the Chief Executive officer of the Zilla

panchayat. It is difficult to find a proper list of beneficiaries of various government schemes and programmes at the village level. Formally the bureaucracy of the taluk take part in the Grama Sabha(Assembly of the Village) while selecting the names of beneficiaries. But what happens after that is remains a question. For the annual report and data of selection of beneficiaries is sufficient as nobody verifies whether such a scheme really benefits the beneficiaries. A case cited here is the construction of dwelling units to the homeless. In most cases the construction of dwelling units is only on the paper even if they are constructed it is difficult to live in those houses. Even if one takes shelter in those houses after some time it becomes very risky to stay in those houses as the construction is of poor quality and chances of collapse such units are frequent in the event of heavy rain or wind. The bureaucracy has no accountability in such circumstances Neither the PRI and NGOs can do something.

Another question were the bureaucracy plays role in the distribution of land to the landless. The records and maps of the land are always with the revenue section of the bureaucracy. one of the common complaint is it is difficult to resolve land disputes particularly in the case of government land. The bureaucracy is the only authority that can decide in this case. Therefore often the PRIs and NGOs have to compromise depending on the decision of the revenue sections of the taluk and district.